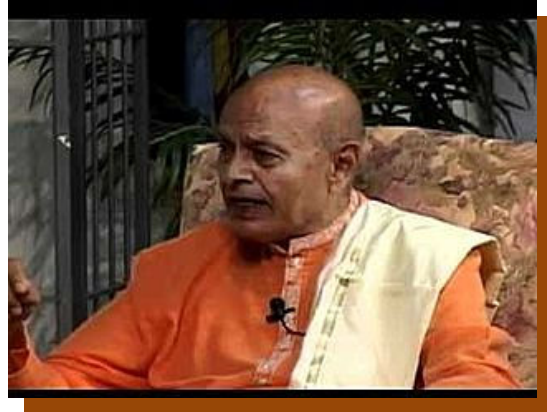


TESTIMONY OF
PANDIT DHARM PRAKASH SHARMA

Delivered in Louisville, September 30, 1994

Greetings from the land of India to all you dear brothers and sisters here. I thank you very much for this opportunity to be with you. I am come from a distant place; and though I am not worthy, yet in the Name which is above every name, the Mighty King, the Savior of the world, and the Lord, I stand before you. Not that I have anything special to share with you, for in every human life each person has his or her quest. I have been traveling along mine from the first day of consciousness in childhood until now; and it is the story of my quest that I would like to share with you.

I want to make use of this evening. I want to take you back in time, about 56 or 57 years, to India as it was before the Second World War. There is state is in the northwest part of India which today is called Rajasthan. Back then it was called Rajaputana. It is the state of warriors, having about 176 dynasties, some large and some small. They were all under British rule. But, from earliest history, the people of Rajasthan were warriors, fighters. Most of the



wars in and around India were fought by those Rajputs. In India, as you probably know, about 70 or 80 percent of the population are Hindus or Sanatan Dharmi; and Sanatani means the religion which goes back to the very beginning. India is a land rich in philosophy, and has a wonderful cultural heritage. From the very beginning, the people of India were not bound by their worldly affiliations and possessions. They were too eager to search out and to come to know the creator whom they call God, or the Parmeshwar Pita or the Satchitanand. This being so, the world history of India is a history of philosophy, religion, and above all, the search for the living God.

In India the Hindus have a very well known place called Pushkar. According to the Indian scriptures from Padma and Purana, Pushkar

is supposed to be the master, and thus is called Guru, the master of all the holy places. Supposedly, Pushkar is the holiest of holies. It has a holy lake which is also called Pushkar. Pushkar means Lotus flower, which is thought to be the most pious and holy of flowers. If you ever study the Lotus flower, you will notice that it is born in mud-dirty mud! It grows out of the mud which smells very unpleasant. But the Lotus flower itself has a very pleasant scent. Thus, out of the mud comes the life of the flower which has no bad odor to it, no mud or dirtiness. Further more, if you put a drop of water on the leaf of the Lotus flower, the water will not stay there, nor will it break the flower's leaf, but will run off. The Lotus flower represents the life of an overcomer. Though he is in the world, nothing of this world belongs to him or is in him. This includes sin and the burden of the darkness of this world.

So Pushkar means the Lotus flower. But it also means holy waters; and in Pushkar is situated a beautiful valley. We have three things geographically. One side there is a large desert, on the other mountains and valleys, and, in between, there is a big lake. All year long you find water, and in the desert blooms the rose. Pushkar is the holiest of holies for Hindus.

There was a chief priest. His name was Pandit Sohanlal Sharma. In his family there was but one son. I, this only son, was born in 1937. It was probably in answer to the prayers of the saints that this lot fell to me. My father was a very great Sanskrit scholar, well known amongst the learned people in India. He was also a freedom fighter with Mahatma Gandhi. In 1921 he gave up everything for India, for the people of India. When Gandhi returned to India from South Africa, my father was one of his colleagues and they worked together.

My mother, she also came from a very rich family of Brahmins; and I was the child of that father and mother. My mother, Gyaneshwary Devi was a very religious and devout lady. All her life she loved God and His commandments more than anything else. God was more precious to her than her very life. When my mother was in jail during the struggle for freedom in India, I was born to her in jail. She was a prisoner of the British in Fatehpur jail. The British refused to release her from jail because she was a very, very staunch worker of the Congress party. She was the president of the women's federation of the Congress in her state, and she was a participant in Satyagraha, the non-cooperation

movement of that time. That is why the British would not release her. I was born in jail where I passed the first three or four months of my life. My life began in jail.

Sometimes, when we are alone and in a pensive mood, we begin to wonder –What am I? What is man? We discover that man is not what he appears to be, what we see on the outside -- he is something else. There is an apparent personality on the one side, but another hidden life also, which we cannot see, on the other. So man is formed of two things – an outer life, and an inner one also, and therein lies the struggle. The outer life is there for us to examine, as much as we wish; but, usually, we do not look much into ourselves. That is the truth; and that was the nature of the struggle which awoke in me.

When I was a child, about three and half years old (my father was still in jail, but my mother had been released some three months earlier), one evening my mother was playing the harmonium. In India, a harmonium is like a small organ on which one person can play alone. It was about midnight and I had fallen asleep in her lap(I was her only child). Suddenly I awakened and noticed that she was weeping copiously. But she was

singing at the same time. She was singing from the Ramcharit Manas which is supposed to be one of the wisest and richest religious books. It is an epic in the form of a hymn which tells the story of the king Rama and of his brother Laxman. In India it is thought that Rama is an incarnation, a powerful incarnation of God. My mother was also a devotee of what is called Ramcharit Manas, or the god Rama. She loved to read the Ramayana everyday—it is a big book containing about one thousand, five hundred pages in lyric form.

So my mother was singing, and as she sang, she wept and wept. It was her tears falling on my body which woke me up. And I asked my mother: “Why are you weeping? It is because father is in jail and remembering him causes you to be upset and to weep? Don’t weep Mom, don’t weep.” She said to me: “My child, it is not your father, but the love of God that makes me weep”

That was a new name for me. I only knew my father and my mother, a few good friends, the lady who looked after me, my food and a few toys. That much was the extent of my experience of life. So I asked my mother: “Who is this God for whom you are weeping?”

“God is your father.” said my mother.

“How is this possible?” I asked, “my father is in the jail, and recently you took me to see him. Who is this other father?”

“He is my father too,” she said.

“Then why don’t you let me meet him, Mom?” I asked. “Take me to him. Next Sunday, please take me to him, I want to meet this person for whom you are weeping so much”

Then, in a very humble manner, she answered me: “You cannot see Him. When you know of His love you will know Him, because God is love. His love makes me weep. When you know of His love, only then can you seek Him, find Him, and meet Him.”

Now at that young age --- I was just a kid--- that was the big question for me. Who is the God who is my father? He is love, and I must find Him: but I cannot. But I need to find Him. And every day my thoughts focused on this point.

When I was about five years old, my father was released from jail. The day he came home I asked him: “Father, I have another father too. Do you know that? His name

is God. My mother weeps because of His love.”

And my father replied very seriously: “You are right, my child. When you know Him, you will seek Him.”

Now my mother had said: “When you know of His love you will find Him.” And now my father was say: “When you know Him, only then you find Him.” And that marked the beginning of my quest. What is this young boy? Who am I? Why is this world around me? Who is God? What is His love? Who is this person? What type of a person is He? A man like my father? Or is He someone else who symbolically plays the part? But He is love, and I must know Him, because He is so precious that my mother wept for Him. I must know Him.

Then suddenly, when I was six years old, a day came in my life when I saw death face to face. I come from a town which, though it is religiously very rich, is quite small. Every day ten to twenty thousand pilgrims come there. There was a certain person, a Brahmin, a very good man. He used to sin and dance to entertain the children. Whenever he was passing on the road he would take any children on to his knee, and he would make them laugh, give them

some chocolate to eat, and sing for them. He was a very fall man with a pleasing personality. So, when I was just a kid, I thought that when I became a young man I must be like him; because he was such a good-natured person that I wanted very much to have a similar good nature. He was a good singer. He was a dramatist too. Twice every month, when there was a village drama, he used to play the leading role in it. So I thought that he was a wonderful man, because he could act also. He dressed very well, with the Indian dhoti and kurta, and the turban on his head; and what was more, he was handsome.

There came a certain morning, when I was standing on the fourth floor of our house, there was a crowd in front of the house, and that man just lay there vomiting blood. He was lying on the ground, and there were people all around him. I ran into the house, and cried in fear to my mother: "Mom look! What is happening to that man--- he is vomiting blood?" So my mother ran to where he was, and said: "He is dead!"

I said: "What's death? What's death?"

An she replied: "When a man dies, it is death."

I asked: "Mom, I also am a man, shall I die also?" She just put her

hand over my mouth, and said: "Don't speak like that". But I continued to question her: "If this man has died, where has he gone? What will he do?"

She answered: "The people will take him to the funeral town, and they will put him in the fire,"

"Then who will come and sing for us?" I asked, "Who will play the principal role in the drama?" I pressed her further: "Mom, will I also die? And will I go somewhere, and not be able to return?"

"Do not even think of such things," she replied. But the questions remained with me --- Who am I? Why am I in this world? Why must a man die? What is death? Where does death take man?

Then, one morning, as I was sitting and pondering these things, my father came to me and said: "Child, are you worried?" I said: "No father, but all these questions! I cannot resolve them. Can you tell me why I have come in to this world?"

I was about seven years old, and that was the day when, for the first time, my father led me to the scriptures of the Vedanta, Shrimad Bhagvat Geeta. In India the

people read from it. We have a very rich heritage in the Vedanta Philosophy. Bhagvat Gesupposed to be the chief doctrines of the Vedanta. From that day, until I was about fourteen years old, I searched through the Vedanta scriptures --- I had one quest” Why was man created? Who is God? After his journey through life, what happens to a man? If the answer is death, then what lies after death? Why death? If I have experienced life, why should anyone take it from me? It is mine, and I must keep it. It is my possession. I have this life, I have been born, I am a man, I have a family, I have my environment, my parents and all my possessions. Why should I die? If a man is born for death, then why does he come in to the world in the first place? Why is he born?

I was searching for the God for whom my mother wept. The God who is love. But I could never find an answer. I had little interest in riches, in religion or philosophy. My search was to come to know the God who is love. I must know this God, and what happens after death, and what it means to be dead. When I failed to find , the answers to these questions in the Hindu scriptures, I decided to read through holy Koran, the scriptures of our dear friends, the Muslims.

I was looking for one thing only --- Where is the God who loves man, whose love moves a person’s heart to tears? We can only shed tears for someone who loves us most deeply, who knows us best, who is nearest to us. Who is that God? Then I was drawn towards Buddhism, and thence to Zoroastrian religion. I searched in all these directions, but my questions still remained unanswered.

When I was about fifteen years old, I lit upon Das Kapital --- Karl Marx’s book of instructions. I read a few chapters, then turned to Leninism also, but to no avail. My quest never changed --- Could I find a reason for my life.

One day, when I was in college, I was sitting in my hostel room preparing for the next day’s lessons. I opened the passage to be studies. The excerpt for the day was the Sermon on the Mount. Before that time I knew very little about the Lord Jesus Christ, and, indeed, about Christianity. All I knew was that Jesus Christ was a good person. He was amongst the Jews, and He followed the truth, as did Gandhi in our country. Gandhi was assassinated for following the truth. Jesus Christ was also crucified for following the truth. He was crucified by How own people, the Jews. That was the

sum of my knowledge of Jesus Christ.

So, I thought that if this sermon is about Jesus Christ, it must be for Christians, it is not for me. But I felt that I should look it up to find out what it refers to.

I discovered that this was a sermon from the Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples. Mahatma Gandhi was very much moved by this sermon; and he tried to imitate it during India's struggle movement. So, the struggle of Mahatma Gandhi during the non-cooperation movement was inspired by the Sermon on the Mount (Mathew's Gospel Chapters 5 through 7). My attention was drawn to this passage of scriptures because of Mahatma Gandhi. After I had read about ten or fifteen lines, I heard voice round about me saying: "I am The One for whom you have been searching since your childhood."

"Who is with me in my room?" I thought. But nobody was there. Then I questioned myself as to whether I was imagining to something. But no! Again there was a sound, the same voice: "I am The One you have been searching for from your very childhood." Then, as fast as I could, I read the whole passage, and found that there is something very wonderful

in it, because it portrayed the life of God. But I had not seen such a person. I had never encountered such a person in all my life, who lived the life portrayed in the Sermon on the Mount. The best persons I was acquainted with were, first of all, Lord Krishna of the Hindus. I compared his life with the life to Lord Rama, one of the other gods in India, Mahatma Gandhi, and Buddha, only to discover that every life I studied was inferior.

I was with Mahatma Gandhi for three months when both my mother and my father were in jail, and he looked after me. I was able to scrutinize every aspect of his life from close up. My conclusion was that there was no man better than Mahatma Gandhi in all the world. But when I read the Sermon on the Mount I had to admit that he could not stand before the person described in it. As I thought on these things a great struggle raged inside me. Is this the same life for which my mother wept? Is it the same life my father spoke of when he said: "On the day when you seek Him, when you will know Him, you will find Him." Is it God, is it God's life? I asked myself.

Again I heard the voice, "The One you are searching for from your earliest experience. This was a

reality for me, every bit as real as the fact that I am here, standing before you. Then suddenly there was a serene, a holy light in that small hostel room where I was sitting. I was alone, and the doors were closed. Light filled my eyes, a wonderful light, as if I had found something very precious. There was a great disturbance inside me as if something was seeking to grasp me. I came out of the room, opened the doors, took my bicycle, and hurried towards the house of the principal of my college who was a veteran Roman Catholic. He was the head of the department of English literature, and a wonderful man. A good teacher too. Once at his house, I asked him: "Sir, can you tell me if Jesus Christ is God? He replied with a question --- "Why what is the matter with you?" I related to him my experience, and what was happening to me. I was greatly troubled. Something was going on inside me, and I was deeply moved in the spirit, sensing that the search which had been continuously with me since I was four years old, was about to be resolved, I had searched everywhere --- through the Vedantas, through the Koran, through the Ramcharit Manasa, the Dham Padas, the Zarusthrasagatha --- for this treasure; but had failed to find it. And here, in that hostel room, I had suddenly come upon

the life of God, the very life of God.

The principal said to me: "Tomorrow, in the classroom, I will help you understand the philosophical aspect of this lesson" I said, "No sir! I do not want any philosophical answer. I just want the answer to one question. Can you tell me if Jesus Christ is God?" And he sent me, driven by a chauffeur, to a Roman Catholic father, who was the high priest of the Roman Catholic church in that vicinity. He was an old Italian brother. I put the same question to him: "Please tell me if Jesus Christ is God, because I have been searching for a God since childhood."

Then he asked, "Are you a Christian?"

I replied "No! I am a staunch Hindu, the son of the chief priest of Pushkar."

He said: "Until you are a Christian, you cannot understand these things"

I replied: "No! I hate the thought of becoming a Christian because I am an Indian, a Hindu Brahmin. But I am searching for the living God. Can you tell me about Jesus Christ? Is He God, or the very life of God?"

He said, "My child, you are but a young man. You cannot understand all these things. When you become a Christian, and are baptized, then you will come to church, you will read the Bible, and you will find out the answer to this question."

I replied: "I would hate to be a Christian." I left him and came out.

But there was a burden in my heart. The whole of the following night I was deeply troubled. I read the Sermon on the Mount many times, but with one question --- "God, can you answer me? Are you there, because I feel you are talking to me?" In the morning I thought, "I must go to the Christians. I must see their lives."

When Jesus taught, He taught that a person should be like the one depicted in the Sermon on the Mount, because this is the expression of the very life of God. This is the life that can be accepted before the Father, before the creator for whom I was searching. If I can have this life, I can come to know Him, and know of His love. I must have this life.

But how can this be --- I cannot purchase this life. I have to seek it. If I want to be an engineer, then

I must go to an engineering college, and seek the knowledge of engineering from the professors, lectures, and teachers of engineering. I assumed that Christians should be the best source for me to see that life. Because, I reasoned, who can be a Christian? Only those who have the life depicted in the Sermon on the Mount.

I had many good Christian friends in my college class. I started contacting them, and related my experience to them, asking: "Can you tell me what this life is, and do you have it?" I started watching their lives. "Blessed are those...etc." If anybody gives you a slap on one cheek, just turn your other cheek. So I tried it out. I slapped a Christian boy. He rounded on me. "Dharm, what do you think you are doing? Have you gone of your mind?" --- and he kicked me!

Is the life of God like that?" I asked myself. "But this is a Christian. Can't he behave like one? Can't he live the life?"

There were a few girls in the college, so I invited them: "This evening I am going to see a movie. How many of you would like to accompany me?"

The Hindu girls replied: "Sorry, we can't go with you."

Why?

"Because you are planning to go to the second show, and it will be too late when we return. It will be nine o'clock at night. Our parents will punish us severely, and we can't go without our parents' permission"

But, when I invited the Christian girls who were in my class, they replied at once: "Of course we will go with you."

Then I asked them: "Don't you have any fear of your parents? Are you not responsible to them?"

I was amazed at their answer I got back: "We don't care what our parents think?" "Are these the followers of Jesus Christ?" I asked myself, "Is this the life I find depicted in the Sermon on the Mount?"

Then I started visiting their families, hoping to find the life there. But no! It was not there.

In front of my college was the Church of England (the Episcopal Church). Every Sunday morning, with much reverence and awe, I started attending the services.

Perhaps I would find that love, that godliness, and the presence of that life there. I reasoned that Jesus Christ must be God, and consequently I should be able to find His presence in the Church. I am sorry to say I failed to find Him in the Church also. Mostly the services were filled with stagnation. There was no life --- just a daily routine. They were not filled with the power of the Spirit. There was no stirring of the hearts of the people, and I saw many which were worse than Hindu temples. It was monotonous. Stand up! Sing! And they all sang. Then the pastor took up some text and expounded on it endlessly, while the congregation murmured and chatted together. On one occasion, while the pastor was delivering an endless sermon, a young man raised his arm with the face of his watch towards the preacher --- within two minutes the pastor closed his sermon. Then followed the benediction, and we were free to go.

I asked myself: "Is this the life of the God who was talking to me in the hostel room. Am I the same person who has been searching for God since my childhood?"

I met the pastor many times. It all seemed to be a sort of game. "You are idolaters. You will go to hell;"

he said. “No!” I replied, “I love God. I am seeking Him.”

“You are still not a Christian,, “ he said. “You cannot be saved. You must be a member of the Church, for only then can you know God. When you don’t know who God is, then you are an idolater. Only Christians know the true God. If you become a member of the church you will be a Christian; only then you know God.”

“No!” I replied, “I don’t want to be a Christian.”

Then it occurred to me that perhaps the Sermon on the Mount was something which was written, but was nowhere to be seen working in the lives of people. Perhaps Jesus Christ was just a myth. In Hindu religion and philosophy there are many gods who are supposed to be mythical. The life of Jesus Christ must be just a story, a myth, and in His name some beautiful things have been written which have been put into the Sermon on the Mount. On the other hand, if Jesus Christ ever really lived, He must have been one of the world’s greatest hypocrites, because He spoke so highly of the divinity, and of God and His life, and spoke about Himself also; but, in His followers, there is not a single vestige of the

life of Jesus Christ, or of the Sermon on the Mount.

If I say, “I am human.” Then everybody would watch my life for some signs of my humanity. If I say: “I am an engineer.” Then everyone would expect to find in me some qualities of an engineer. But there was no sign of the Sermon on the Mount in Christianity. Thus it seemed to me that Christianity was a false religion, just an imitation. So where is the Sermon on the Mount? It is in the Bible. I went into the college library and tried to check out three Bibles which were listed in the catalogue. The Librarian told me that they were reference books and could not be taken out.

I was vice-president of our college student union. I went to the vice principal of the college who immediately wrote on my library card --- “Issued”. I took out all three Bibles, and then invited some friends who were standing in the street, outside a café. “Come!” I said, “I want to give you a message.” About three or four hundred students gathered around me. I lifted up the three Bibles, and said: “Do you see what this is? This is the book of Christianity, the book of Christians. This book brought the Portuguese here, and the

British. It has made us slaves to the British and to the Portuguese. This is the book which has spoiled the culture and the religion of our country. What should we do with this Jesus Christ, who is nothing but a hypocrite?

Then, strange to relate, they all cried out: "To hell with Him, to hell with Him!"

I tore the Bibles to shreds, and crushed them under my feet, and asked a friend: "Do you have any kerosene?" He ran into a café and brought out a bottle of kerosene which he poured out on the Bibles. One young man, who was standing beside me, and smoking, threw his cigarette into the kerosene, and the whole pile burned up.

And I congratulated myself: "I have done something good!" But the quest for the truth, for God, was still there --- as alive as ever!

Still dissatisfied, I took a sharp turn towards the world. From God to the world. "I must now seek pleasure in the world." I said to myself, "Perhaps I may find peace there too?" So, as a poet, as a journalist, a writer and a dramatist, I just drifted around in the mud of this world. I had finished my post-graduate work by that time, and out of the blue there came an invitation.

(Forgive me for saying it—I was a handsome young man at the time. Of course this did not make me any the less a sinner).

By chance, I met a friend who was in the film industry. He was a very well-known film star at the time. He came to Kashmir and met me. As soon as we met, and he saw me, he invited me to Bombay, the film capital of India. Within about three months I was invited to play a leading role in about four films, which had the best known directors – Mahesh Kaul, Kamal Amrohi and Kedar Sharma. All three are veteran film directors in India. They all signed me up as the leading man in their forthcoming films.

I received a thousand dollars in advance just for signing the contracts. I found myself in the film world. It wasn't much later that I received an invitation from the government of the U.S.S.R (this was an honor bestowed upon me to study the most modern methods of cinematography, and the art of acting and direction at the Vekhtengov Institute in Kieve.) Now I was riding high, right in the middle of the filth of this world. Money was mine, as were beautiful women. Everything that you can name of the world is found in the film world of India---

and it was all mine. But, in spite of all this, the presence of God was still with me; and my real quest never left me --- the search for the true God.

After three months in the U.S.S.R an urgent call came to me from India – “You are urgently needed at home.” I hurried back to India. When I arrived back in my hometown, I was informed: “Your mother has been in a coma for the last five days. She underwent a kidney operation and has failed to regain consciousness. It is uncertain whether she will survive, so you are urgently needed at the hospital.

After four days my mother came out of her coma, and, when she opened her eyes, she asked me: “Have you returned from Bombay?” I said, “No Mom, I have returned from Kieve. I was not in Bombay.” Then she said to me: “My child, from today onwards you will not do any more films.”

I said: “Mom, the films are my life. Art is my life. I have already signed up for many films. I have to fulfill my obligation.” “No! you must not follow that path, because God gave you to me for a specific purpose,” she said. Then my mother went on to relate to me an experience she had had years

earlier. “One evening (I was still childless at the time), I wept before God, I wept before Him, and promised: If you will give me a son, I will not keep that son for myself: I will give him back to You. So I have to fulfill that promise. You were not given to me to live a life in the things of the world. You must have a holy life. You must seek God. Your life must be acceptable to Him.”

“Mom,” I said, “then what should I do?”

“Leave the film industry,” she replied.

All my life, and even still today, I have respected my mother and father above everything else. I have always obeyed my parents. So, I said: All right Mommy, I will not go back to the film industry.”

For a month I was in Pushkar. Then, one day, I received an invitation from a well-known Indian industrialist, Birlas (the Birlas are rather like the Rockefellers in America). I joined them as a special manager.

But, before that, something happened in my life. When I was troubled and upset, and worrying what my future career would be; and when my thoughts turned back to my childhood quest for God,

one day, when I was coming out of the hospital, I saw a young girl whom I used to see frequently, from my childhood, in my dream. The dream was very simple --- there was a big fort in the wilderness surrounded by bushes. The fort was built of big red stones, and had two golden gates. When the dream began, a young woman, fully dressed in white, came out of the fort, and stood amongst the bushes, looking into the distance. Then she turned back, went into the fort and the gates were closed; and the dream was over.

Again and again that dream repeated itself, sometimes twice a month, sometimes more often. From a very early age, even up till that day, the dream repeated itself. When I was a young fellow, about sixteen years old, I asked my psychology professor what the meaning of the dream was. And he replied: "It is a type of dementia, a sort of disease of the mind. Don't worry. When you are mature the mania will go away." But I was mature, I was twenty-two years old and still the dream repeated itself. In fact, the very night before I saw the girl on the road it came again.

I stopped the girl. It was the same white sari, the same face, the same everything in the dream.. I stopped

her and asked what her name was. (Now, in India it is not the custom for a man to stop a young girl, who is a stranger, in the middle of the road. You cannot do that. It is absolutely contrary to the customs of the country). So she was understandably shocked, and asked: "What do you want from me?"

I said: "What is your name? What is your parent's name?" And she replied: "I am a Christian. My father is a minister of the gospel, and my mother is the nursing superintendent for the state of Rajasthan." Something inside me suddenly constrained me. "Will you marry me!" I asked. I believe that in America too, one cannot just ask this question out of the blue, as it were. The girl was horrified, and said: "Be quiet! You are talking rubbish. You must know that I am a Christian, and that you should not talk to me in this way." And she ran off.

son of the chief priest." I was still a film star at the time, and had not yet left the film industry although I had promised my mother that I would not go back to Bombay, but I was still a film star; and people crowded around me to get my autograph, or hoping that I might give them a kiss. They

wanted to see me --- a real film star --- on their streets.

and met her mother and father. Something was just burning within me. It was as if somebody was saying to me: "This is the way! This is the way! This is the way!" That girl is my wife now. She was just a little slim, slip of a girl at that time, and (I must tell you in order for you understand the whole story) being a film star, I had quite a striking appearance. I belonged to a chief priest's family, I was wealthy, cultured, well educated, with a striking appearance, and last but not least --- a film star! The girl, on the other hand, had no striking appearance, no make-up, no high class clothes, just the white garb of a servant. The contrast was striking, There was I, the big film star, and she, just a little girl. We were even from totally different classes in society -- I was a Brahmin, and she of a lower class or caste. But something was telling me, was impressing on my heart: "This is the way! This is the way!"

In any event, I contacted her seven times during that one month; and every time, I was refused. Then, without any warning, that same girl came to see

At once I replied: "All right! Good!"

It was not a Christian marriage ceremony, nor a Hindu one either. The district Magistrate, who was a senior government officer, was a friend of mine. So I asked him if he would issue me a marriage certificate. Three days later we received the marriage license.

With that Christian girl as my bride, I returned to the chief priest's house. My father was a very well known person in Hindu circle; and my mother was devoted to God. A Christian girl was abruptly introduced into this family. I simply announced: "Mom! This is my bride."

They were all astonished. My mother wept, and said: "What have you done? Has my stopping you from being a film star reduced you to this? It would have been better if you had return to film world. You have disgraced us. We cannot hold our heads up in public now. What have you done? And what will become of your father? After all, he is the chief priest of this place; and you have brought a Christian girl into this house. What is more, the girl is not of your social class, she just like a maid servant."

Next morning, when I awoke at four o'clock, I noticed that the girl was not in the bed in my room. I

looked in an adjoining room and there she was. The light was on and she was on her knees; and she was weeping. This book, which I rejected and discarded, was opened in front of her, and she was weeping and praying. Her prayer was: "Oh God! Please fulfill the purpose for which You have brought me over here. Please fulfill it. Keep me faithful to this purpose for which You have brought me over here. He is a young man, and very handsome, with plenty of money and all that appeals to the world. Oh God! Keep me strong so that I may not be swayed---then Your purposes may be fulfilled here in this house."

Within a month she won my father and my mother, by her love, her meekness. For fifteen days my mother never talked to her, never even looked at her face. She pleaded repeatedly with my mother: "Mom, I am your servant. Mom, I love you. Treat me as a girl that is lost. Accept me. I am your daughter. Don't treat me as your son's bride. I am your daughter, Mom."

She used to wash my mother's feet. She worked harder than any servant will not leave me. You will leave me no more for you are my daughter now."

Within a month she had won my father. She had already won my mother's heart. My mother said: "We are happy now. Though we have lost our son, we have found someone who is better than a son in our home." Through my wife's life, over a period of thirteen years in my home, I saw Christ walking, talking and moving. I saw the life of the Sermon on the Mount in my house. Not only I, but my parents and everybody else. The people of that town, the priests (it became a common thing in Pushkar) used to tell their daughters, the wives of their sons: "If you want to be a good woman, a good daughter, go and learn from Asha..." My wife's name is Asha. Brother Bakht Singh gave her that name --- it means Hope. The people in her family also started to call her Asha---Hope. The townspeople would say: "Go and learn of Asha!" Many ladies from the town started visiting our house, and Asha began to give them the Gospel.

Her life was the Gospel to me. Every time that trials and testings came upon me, I found out how strong she was in the Lord. Every moment in our family she lived the life of the Lord Jesus Christ without any fear. She did not even fear the loss of her life. There were persecutions and

blasphemies. There were displays of anger from me too, because in the beginning, when she first entered our household, a great conflict raged in me about the Gospel and about Christianity, I thought that Christianity was no more than hypocrisy. When she first became my wife, I said to her: "You are free to follow your Lord. I won't hinder you. If you want to, you can go to church. You may read the Bible. If you need books, I will bring them home for you; but please, never try to impose the Bible on me, because it does not mean anything to me. To me it is a book for hypocrites. I have never found a true Christian, so never thrust this book on me."

Just once she asked me: Dear will you please read me a small portion from this book?"

She was cleaning the vegetables, and she said it to me very lovingly. So I said: "All right, I will read it for you." I knew why she asked me to read that portion --- it was Psalm 23; and I read it. But then I tore the page out, and in a rage, I said: "Have I not told you never to interfere in my life with this book?" And I threw it at her face. Her face was cut because it was a hard bound Hindi Bible, it was very hard bound with thick cardboard. Her face was cut, but there was no reaction. Nothing but

love came out of her eyes. She stood up, picked up the pieces of the Bible and said: "My dear, God loves you, God loves you, God loves you. He will find you one day. Yes! He will find you one day."

I must testify that every time persecution came in her life, the love of God through her just increased and grew. I can remember thousands of instances during thirteen years of our married life. I hated Jesus Christ. I blasphemed. Sometimes I joked, or mocked the Lord Jesus Christ to her face. I even challenged her: "It's all fake, your two hours of prayer every morning."

She used to rise at four o'clock in the morning. By five o'clock she would have finished all the morning work in the house. Then she would kneel down for two hours of meditation and prayer, after which she would serve me as a servant. She would cook for me. If I was to return late at night, she would wait up for me. Furthermore, she would not eat anything until I had eaten. She would cook fresh food for me at 12 o'clock, midnight. When I had finished my meal, whatever was left in the kitchen was, first for the servants, then the children would eat, then anyone else who happened to be in the house, and

afterwards she would eat --- last of all. Whenever there were guests in the house, she would serve the servants first, then those who were in need. She loved to have guests in the home. And everything I saw

In America, if a husband abuses or slaps his wife it is against the law. But I am talking of India! Many times I spoke angrily and bitterly to my wife; and when I saw her devotion to Jesus Christ, I slapped her in the face. But there was no reaction ---just love and forgiveness. The more I persecuted her, the more her love increased. And so, for thirteen years, in every area of her life, I put her to the test. I was just watching to see if the Sermon on the Mount was the truth or not. And I found out that it is truth, it is Truth!

And at last it happened. I was in Calcutta, and the team from the World Bank, with its chairman, Mr. Philip Junior, was visiting the city. I was to receive them, to take them for the whole day to see my industry, and in the evening we were to have dinner together.

In the morning of this important day, my wife was putting my shoes on for me, and tying the laces. She sat on the ground, while I was on the sofa.

Customarily she would see that my suit was put on properly, and tie the knot in my tie for me, and check that the handkerchief was neatly in my jacket pocket. She would make sure that I had my brief case. She served me as if I were a child, and she --- my mother. She did everything for me. It was so from the beginning.

On that fateful day in Calcutta, she was sitting on the floor, attending to my shoes; and she said: "Dear, come home a little early this evening."

I asked: "What for?"

She replied: "A servant of God is coming, and I really would like you to meet him."

"Which servant?" I asked.

"A servant of the Lord Jesus Christ," she said. She was talking about brother Bakht Singh. It was in 1972.

"This servant, Bakht Singh, is the servant of God?" I inquired.

"Yes. He is a wonderful man. When you meet him, you will know it.

There will be a blessing for you if you meet him."

"I can't come!" I said.

And she replied: “No! My God will bring you.”

“Your God, Jesus Christ, will bring me?” I asked mockingly, “from the World Bank team?” Then, just like a child, she said: “Yes, my God is a faithful God. He will bring you. It is my prayer that you may meet this godly person. You will receive a blessing.” I was furious. I shot back: “I can’t come.”

Then again she replied: “No, No! my God will bring you, early in the evening”

I am ashamed to speak of it. I did something terrible. She was sitting on the floor, tying my shoe laces, and I kicked her in the face; and mocked: “Your God will bring me back from the World Bank team?”

She was just a little woman, and I had kicked her with all my strength. She rolled on the floor. The sole of my shoe had pierced her neck, and there was a big wound with blood pouring out of it. I was utterly horrified! What had I done?

She rolled over three or four times, and then stood up. There was blood all over her clothes --- her sari and blouse were all soaked with blood; and the wound was

still bleeding. She just sat down again, took my shoes, and started tying my laces. And I said to myself: “What’s this? What is this? No complaint? No crying? No fighting back? No blaming me?”

Hearing some sound, my mother hurried into the room, and gasped: “What has happened to you?” And she answered – “Mom, nothing has happened. I just fell down. But he has to go to the office, and he must leave at once.” And she came to me, and made me stand up. She loved me in spite of the blood, and said: “God still loves you. He is a God of love. However far you run, God will always follow you.” Then, as a mother speaking to a child: “My dear don’t be angry. God loves you. Please come early in the evening.” She led me to the car, opened the door, made me sit down, and then repeated once again: “Come home early this evening. God loves you.”

On the way to the office my thoughts could not escape what I had just witnessed: “What is this woman?” I had never seen anyone with such great love. It had not just been one day, two days, or even one month --- it had been thirteen years from 1961 to 1972; and in every circumstances of life. On that very day, on my way to the office I was weeping in the car.

“Oh God! Is this what You are like?”

Then once again, the same voice that formerly rang in my ears: “When you know of His love, then you will find Him” My mother had said to me: “God is love. His love makes me weep. The day when you seek His love you will find Him.”

No greater love than this! If this woman can love me like this, what must

This love is so real and deep when one actually encounters it. The love of God constrains and reaches to the very bottom of the dark pit in the wicked human heart. That was the first occasion in my life when, in Calcutta, in spite of all my great responsibilities in the business organization, and in the midst of negotiating a big financial deal with the World Bank, the presence of God’s love and authority triumphed and enfolded me. It happened surprisingly, beyond anything one could have imagined. My deal with the World Bank was finalized by 4 p.m. The prearranged dinner with the team was postponed to the following evening due to ill-health on the part of the team chairman.

I was free indeed! How wonderfully God took over control of the situation that day. No reason or barrier was left. Please come home early...my God will bring you...” That prayer and authoritative call of the meek heart was powerfully answered.

When I reached home, my wife was ready to leave with me; as if she was confident of my coming. Beaten and wounded in the flesh, but overcoming and rejoicing in the Spirit, Asha, my wife, the Hope of a sinner’s heart, accompanied me to the place where God’s servant had been staying for three days. We were a few minutes late, but, before our arrival, this servant of God – Brother Bakht Singh – had already left for Bombay. No matter, I had touched the presence of God, and what it means to obey Him, and this led and followed me towards the only Way, and Truth in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The crisis came in 1972. One afternoon at midday, when I was in all the mud of politics (I was general secretary of the Congress Committee, and a member of the Parliament). The midterm elections were held in Rajasthan state. I came home in the morning from the election campaign, and was to leave again in the evening. That afternoon, when I was lying

down on my bed at noon to take a rest, it came to me to read a book. I picked up one up which was laying beside me. The book was – With and Without Christ. You may have heard of it. A wonderful testimony of the Lord in my country --- India. The writer, Sadhu Sunder Singh, came from the Sikh religion, and lived for the Lord. When I read his testimony, I found out that, to my knowledge, he was the only person who was a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ in whom I saw, in testimony, the actual life of Christ. So I started to read the book.

Then it happened! I heard the same voice which I had heard about twenty you persecute Me? How long will you persecute Me? I love you. You are mine.”

I knew that voice. It was so humble, so loving and so gentle to me. It came from all around me, from inside me; and I said:

“Lord, I know You love me. I have tested Your love for the last thirteen or fourteen years. I know that You love me.”

“Then why do you persecute me? Why are you running away from Me?” And I replied: “I am not worthy to come to You. When I look into myself I see that I am totally unworthy. I am sinner, a

lost person. You know it. You know how, for the last twenty or twenty-five years, I have persecuted You. I have blasphemed Your name. I have rejected the Word of God.”

“But still I love you. I still love you.” And on that day it happened! Suddenly something grasped hold of me from all around. Something was squeezing me from the inside, some power. And that room where I was sitting, it was filled with power. It was as if I was being taken away from my bed to some other place. Something happened inside me, and I saw light, and light. And I cried out: “Lord, Oh my God, I am the most sinful person on this world. Do You love me still?” And He said: “Yes, because I have shed my blood for you. I love you.”

After that I don’t know what happened. Some power grasped me, and the place was filled with divine light. He had given me something. It was as if everything in me was light. I was unconscious for two hours. When I woke up, I was weeping copiously. I was on the floor, and my wife was kneeling beside me and praying. I opened my eyes and said, “Just look! I have met the Lord. I was in His presence. She

just said: “Yes, I know, I can feel it.

“I love Him,” I said, and she replied: “Yes, He loves you.”

“We belong to the Lord.” I said, and she agreed, “Yes, we are the Lord’s. I went on: “I have known Him from generation to generation.” Yes, He is our from the beginning.” said my wife.

My life on that day, as you must know, was like a dry leaf, like a feather – just hovering in the air with no weight to it. It was as if I was just going up, and up, and up. On that day my quest for truth was fulfilled. The search for the ultimate Being was resolved. My childhood question to my mother, and her response ---“God is love. When you know of His love, then you will find Him” --- was fully answered. And the question I had to put to my father --- “When can I know the truth, father?” and he had replied --- “When you know Him you will find Him.” On that day, through His divine and gracious love, I knew Him. I found Him. My life was changed from that day.

It was a wonderful experience for me. And from that day till today I belong to Him. I can tell you dear brethren, with all due respect, that true peace, which accompanies the

love of God towards us, is only found in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. During the last twenty year, the last twelve of which I have been engaged in my ministry, the presence of the Savior has always remained with me. And today I am here, not because I am a Christian minister of the Gospel, or because I want to tell you something about the philosophy of Christianity of religion. From this experience I have been brought to see that Jesus Christ incarnate, Jesus Christ the omnipotent, omniscient life of the living God, is the only way for mankind to attain peace. I have tasted this, have lived it, and seen it --- I have touched Him with my own hands. I have besought Him with tears. I have seen Him and His wonderful love with my own eyes. My life, to me at least, is now meaningless without the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ. If we have that life, we have the greatest hope in the world. Therefore today the world no longer needs my religion; it does not need any philosophy. The only answer to the needs of our day is the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In India, whence I come, there are about one billion plus people. Of these, about eight hundred million are Hindus. For about six thousand years they have been seeking and searching through

Hindu scriptures for the life of the living and loving God, who is the creator, the Father. But they have failed to see that life till today. All those Hindu scriptures cry out for one thing alone. There is a prayer I want to relate which is in one of the Hindu Vedic scriptures – Brahada Aranyak Upanishadak – wherein the Sages and Seekers of God prayed:

“Oh God! We are passing through utter darkness
You are the light of life. Show us that light,
And lead us to that Eternal light.
We are overwhelmed with death – Oh God!
We have not found life. Give us life eternal,
Which is your life.
We are in ignorance. We are lost in sin.
You are truth.
You are the truth, the ultimate truth. How can
We find You?
Open the door of that truth, that we may enter in.”

Christ alone is the answer: He said,
“I am the way, I am the truth,
I am the life, and the light.”

But how, how can the people of India see, find and live that life?
It cannot be sold or bought. I cannot be made available through lectures, speeches or sermons. If

my wife had given me a very good sermon on the first day of our marriage --- “You must love Christ. You must be saved. You must be born again. You must be a Christian.” I would have kicked her out of my house that self-same day. But she lived with all humility and meekness, she lived the Sermon on the Mount. That was the life of the Living God. Whereas I, on the other hand, I had read the life of the Lord Krishna, the life of Lord Rama, the life of Budha, and the life of Gandhi. I had found that they fell short in one way or another. Then it was confirmed in my heart that Jesus Christ must be the very embodiment of the Living God in the world. Today the people of India are searching for the living God; and the only answer to them is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not found in religion, not in philosophy. But the true meaning of the Lord Jesus Christ – my wife lived that life before us. For thirteen long years I watched her, then I was won for the Lord. It was confirmed to me that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Truth itself, the only way, the only life. And I was touched, and my whole life was changed.

There I was, a chief priest’s son who drank and was a drunkard. Every evening I would go to a five star hotel and sit with my friends

whilst we consumed a whole bottle of Johnny Walker Scotch whiskey. As I was a chief priest's son I would perform my religious rituals every morning, and I was a smoker --- I used to smoke pipe. I was a liar, though I was generally thought to be a good person by those around me. I was a very successful politician; but many times I made the people around me blaspheme. In every sphere of my life there was greed, the lust of the world and anger. I played a part in many, many bad things. But the very day that I received the Lord Jesus Christ, instantly it was as if those things were swept away from me. His peace entered into me, and I was changed completely.

The people of India today are hungry and thirsty for that supreme life. How can that life be conveyed to them? Not by preaching, not by great sermons. The people of India want to see, want to test that life as to its practical reality. The Sermon on the Mount is the way, the perfect way, the perfect life of God. If we are in fellowship with the Lord, and we follow Him, we receive that life.

If I was to recount this testimony to you in detail, it would take days, even weeks on end; because in every corner of my life, the providence and the faithful hand of

God have been with me. I experienced the very pinnacles and the filthy depths of this world, but the God of Grace brought me back and away from all of them. He saved me for one purpose – that I might serve my Lord who has saved me. That many who are lost in my country close to a billion people walking through the valley of darkness and death – that they may seek Him and find Him. Pray for that!! Pray also that you may all be not only prayer partners but a true witness for the people of India. There are many Indians here. Your lives may move them – those people who are the daughters and sons of the great seers and sages of that country. They are seeking truth – that they may see the living and loving life of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. If a sinner like me can be saved, they also can be moved, and they can find the Christ, the only answer for mankind. So may God bless each one of you.

I am grateful to you. I am afraid I have taken much of your precious time. May this testimony move your hearts, and make you more worthy to stand one day before the throne of our Gracious Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Praise the Lord.

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